THE

EPISTLE

FROM THE

YEARLY MEETING,

HELD IN

LONDON,

By ADJOURNMENTS, from the 22d to the 31ſt of the Fifth Month, 1799, incluſive;

To the *QUARTERLY* and *MONTHLY MEETINGS* of *FRIENDS* in *GREAT BRITAIN*, and *IRELAND.*

DEAR FRIENDS,

AFTER ſome ſerious inveſtigation into the preſent ſtate of our religious Society, wherein, we humbly truſt, that the gracious Head of the Church hath not been wanting, to cement our minds in the bond of his love, and from time to time to refreſh us together, we again ſalute you; and inform you, that at this our large annual aſſembly, a concern has been felt, extending to every branch of the family. We deſire it may be bound up in the ſame precious cementing union; that ſo, not any thing which has a tendency to ſcatter, may be ſuffered to prevail. To this end, may it be the chief care of all, to dwell near the Power, by the aſſiſtance of which unſanctified ſelf is reduced and denied: then will the wiſdom which is from above be exalted, and brought into dominion.

The accounts of Sufferings brought up this year from the various parts of this nation, amount to Seven thouſand four hundred and ſeventy eight Pounds; and thoſe from Ireland, to Seven hundred and ſeventy one Pounds; chiefly for Tithes, Prieſts' demands, and thoſe called Church-rates; and alſo for various demands on account of the Militia, and other warlike meaſures, with which, from a conviction that we ought not to be active in promoting the deſtruction of the precious, yea invaluable, lives of mankind, we ſcruple to comply.

We

We have this year received Epiſtles from four, only, of the Yearly Meetings on the American continent; namely the Carolinas, &c. Virginia, Maryland, and Pennſylvania. The laſt, having met at the uſual time of its ſitting, during the prevalence of a contagious and highly mortal fever, adjourned to the Twelfth Month laſt. By this diſeaſe thouſands of the inhabitants of Philadelphia were quickly removed out of time. Let us, in reverence of ſoul, avoid too nice an inquiry into the moral cauſes of ſuch dreadful calamities; but ſeek, with unremitting ſolicitude, an entrance, through the ſtrait gate, into that narrow, but not untrodden path, which alike leads to bleſſedneſs through every diſpenſation of the Lord's unerring Providence.

Friends, we in this land, do not live unſurrounded by manifold dangers; nor in an age in which we can diſpenſe with any part of the whole armour of light. The increaſe of mortality in a country brings the body into jeopardy; but it often arouſes the careleſs, and drives the awakened mind into cloſer communion with God. But it is the peculiar property of many of the contagious vices and vanities, with which theſe countries abound, that they lull to ſecurity the incautious, even though once arouſed; and point their infection at the well-being of the ſoul.

By what means, then, ſhall we expect preſervation? Our belief, dear friends, is, that it will depend on a frequent recurrence to our firſt principle: even to the ſaving power of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, revealed in the heart. "This," ſaid our Redeemer when perſonally on earth, "is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and "Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent." But this, friends, is no trivial nor momentary acquirement. Many of you know that it muſt be waited for in ſingleneſs of heart; and that the important purſuit of this heavenly knowledge ſhould regulate the tenor of our lives. Where then, judge ye, would any find leiſure for thoſe amuſements, in which ſome in profeſſion with us, are reported to waſte much of their time? This meeting has repeatedly teſtified againſt vain ſports, and places of diverſion, as ſo many allurements tending to draw the mind from its watch, and to lay it open to further temptation. The beſt recreation of a Chriſtian is the relief of diſtreſs; and his chief delight, to promote the knowledge, and to exalt the glory, of his Heavenly Maſter: and this, is moſt effectually done, under his holy influence, by a life of faith, purity, and general benevolence. Falſe principles too, as well as wrong practices, may have their advocates for a time; but the unſpotted lives of the faithful remain to be their beſt refutation. Let none then ſtart aſide at the magnitude of the object, or be too much diſmayed becauſe of the little progreſs they ſeem to themſelves to make in the way of holineſs; but, truſting in the Lord, who "giveth power to the faint," let us all preſs after ability to comply with the apoſtolic advice, "Be "ye holy, in all manner of converſation."

We have received accounts, this year as well as in preceding years, that divers perſons have joined our Society by convincement. For you of this deſcription, we feel a tender care, that, after admittance into memberſhip, you may not meaſure yourſelves by the ſtandard of

of others; nor take up a reſt ſhort of the true reſt. Seek rather an increaſe in the heavenly principle which comes by Jeſus Chriſt, the true and holy pattern for his flock. Thus only, will your union with us contribute to your advantage; and thus only, will the increaſe of numbers produce an increaſe of the joy.

Now, turning our attention to the church in its more collected capacity, of Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, we perceive that weakneſs and langour continue to pervade the deliberations of ſome of them, on the important concerns of the Society; and often prevent the due and timely ſupport of that Chriſtian diſcipline, which we have long experienced to be, under Providence, as a wall of preſervation. Nevertheleſs, we believe we can alſo diſcern that there is a gradual increaſe of care in many places; and that the quickened ſenſibility, with which the minds of numbers of our brethren are graciouſly indued, has rendered many things burthenſome, which in times of greater negligence, ſcarcely have been noticed: and to this we attribute many of the complaints now contained in the anſwers to the queries. Our deſire therefore is, that ſuch upright minds may be encouraged to perſevere. That which ſhows the diſeaſe muſt be looked to for the remedy. Hold on, then, your way, beloved friends; and may the Lord give you all the diſcernment, ſkill, forbearance and fortitude, which are requiſite for the impartial and ſeaſonable diſcharge of the truſt which he commits to you.

Finally friends, collectedly and individually, farewell! May all our Meetings be held, with weight, as in the immediate preſence of the heavenly Preſident. May the aged among us be examples of every Chriſtian virtue; and evince, by the calmneſs of their evening, that their day has been bleſt. May the middle aged not faint in their allotted ſtations; but, together with their elder and younger brethren, firmly ſupport, yea exalt, the ſeveral teſtimonies which we are called to maintain. And, O! may the beloved youth, the tender objects of our care, and of our hope, bend early and chearfully under the forming power of Truth: that thus, each ſtanding in his allotment, the harmony of the building may be preſerved, and we may truly grow up into an holy temple for the Lord.

Signed in and on behalf of the Meeting,

GEORGE STACEY, Clerk.

Yearly Epiſtle,

1799.